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## **Return of Afghans from Pakistan: Linguistic and Visual Portrayal in the International and Pakistani print Media**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The majority of news items on Afghan immigrants in the International press refer to their arrival in different countries, and amongst them Pakistan is at the top, during and after the invasion of Soviet Union in 1979. However, the focus of this study is the return of Afghan immigrants from Pakistan in last six years. This study reports the linguistic and pictorial representation of the return of Afghan immigrants to their homeland from Pakistan. Three types of Van Leeuwen's (2008, p.5) descriptive social network models are applied. Van Leeuwen's models help to critically scrutinize the whole process in terms of linguistic and visual discourse analysis. It is found that in international news media tend to project superficially on the return of Afghan refugees with their own perspective, while in Pakistani print media, there are mixed reactions about the refugees. Also, the paper timely contributes to the knowledge about the Afghan refugees, who mostly do not want to go back to their homeland but they are forced to do so due to the wave of terrorism and conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan governments.

**Key words:** discourse analysis, social semiotics, social actors and social actions, Afghan immigrants

### **Introduction**

There is significant concern about migration in global media, and immigration has opened the door for linguistic investigation of social, economic and cultural dimensions. Nevertheless, there are studies of comparing and contrasting migration dialogues across languages and societies; a trivial amount of research has focused on return of immigrants from the host countries. Thus, the study may be able to depict media discourses across contexts about the return of Afghan refugees. The study stands for untapped potential for return of Afghans focusing on the Discourses as recontextualization of social practices purposed by Leeuwen, (2008, p.5). Moreover, in this research, the forced return of Afghan migrants is a focal point of representation of social acts performed by social actors.

The process of migration from the native home to the adoption of life in the country of acceptance, is long-lasting and multifaceted, with the accomplishment of the immigrant dependent on the interaction of

individual and environmental reasons. It is as old as human history. The economic, political, and religious aspirations work as exploration fuel for such movements. Hence, immigration may be the result of a concomitant search for opportunity. Nevertheless, all people of a country do not fancy migrating to a new land. For instance, Afghan immigrants' migration is a response to crises of war due to the invasion of Soviet Union (now Russia). Unluckily, departure had become inevitability rather than a selection for many Afghans because of violence and war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has received a number of Afghan immigrants in the last few decades due to the war in their homeland. They arrived with the purpose of finding a peaceful place to live and to earn the bread and butter for their families. In 1970 Pakistan warmly welcomed Afghan refugees with open arms allowing them to assimilate with local population. Most of the Afghan refugees were ethnic Pashtuns, so they merged with them quite well on the basis of their Islamic identity rather than Afghan nationhood (Ciment, 2015 p.495). Consequently, many people consider that Pakistan welcomed the refugees to expand its impact in Afghanistan, which had conventionally skewed towards India, and to neutralize its own Pashtun nationalists who were assertive for inordinate sovereignty.

After post-9/11, when anti Pakistan Taliban began to evolve, Pakistan expressed some apprehensions and reservations about Afghan refugees. That was the start of gradual change in the policies about afghan refugees. Nevertheless, Pakistan has not initially demanded urgency to drive the Afghans home. Primarily, there were different deadlines started since 2002, for the refugees to leave, but the decision was not imposed strictly by Pakistan government. The decisive push came in after the attack on Army Public School in 2014, and Pakistan set a deadline for the refugees to leave in 2015. It was further extended for next six months with the closure of Torkham border. Pakistan also started to control borders strictly after the attack on Bacha Khan University (BKU) near Charsadda in January 2016.

Hence, Pakistan has had a difficult relationship with Afghanistan from the time of independence, remaining to unresolved border disputes and the dread that Pakistani Pashtuns might align with their ethnic neighbours to form a greater Afghanistan. This distrustful perception would be more than enough to raise hackles in Islamabad, but Pakistani officers also incline to see an Indian prowling in Afghanistan. That is because they believe that India might use its influence in Afghanistan to threaten Pakistan Western border and set up a war. Ever since 9/11, Pakistanis have complained to American officials that Indian secret agents, in two-dozen consulates inside Afghanistan, pay informers and damage Pakistani interests. Pakistani military briefers have also tended to characterize the Afghan government of President Karzai as incorrigibly pro-Indian (Markey, 2013 p.40). That is the perspective in which this study will be evaluated.

### ***Objectives and Implications***

The study points out that the media has strengthened subjectivity of news, including both international and Pakistani contexts. The findings infer that both sorts of news media do not only represent the truth rather tend to reinforce the subjectivity of media beyond choosy revelation on content of the receiver. The analysis of text/visual aspects of the selected titles and visuals of the news articles would help to attain following objectives:

1. To observe different functions of semiotic resources in international and Pakistani media discourse.
2. To discover appropriateness of multimodal semiotics for news articles' titles and in the context of return of Afghan immigrants.
3. To probe into the use of semiotic resources.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What are the ways in which the process of return of Afghan refugees can be represented in International and Pakistani news media discourse?
2. How is the return of Afghan immigrants represented and realized linguistically in the International and Pakistani news articles' discourse?
3. How are Afghan refugees depicted visually in the international and Pakistani media?

### ***Research Methodology***

The study presents a qualitative content discourse analysis of the titles and visuals of news articles. Van Leeuwen's networks for the Representation of Social actors, Social Actions, and Visual representation of Social actors have been incorporated to provide the central framework for the analysis (2008, pp. 23-136). Van Leeuwen's framework has been selected because it categorizes the discourse by means of socio-semantic meaning, rather than lexico-grammatical. Because of such classification, the practice of power as social actions, by different social actors can be inferred with the proposed possible connotation of such adoptions in discourse. Furthermore, the process and the relation of the texts have also concisely been examined to determine how the particular choice of practices can be exploited in juxtaposition with the social actors and social actions to categorize messages within discourse. So that, conceptual presumptions underneath the surface structures of language could be created. The language of titles and visuals will be analyzed to identify prevalent processes implemented within multimodal text. It is to be considered that text in the case of news articles' titles and images is vibrant and multimodal as it includes different modes which are resources for making meaning. The study also demonstrates how such messages were constructed within the texts to convey either meaning in the text or through visuals (Kress, 2010, p. 75).

Since the purpose of the study is to perceive how social practices are represented in dynamic multimodal media text and context, the researcher combines different aspects of

critical multimodal discourse analysis by Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 10) and Kress and Leeuwen (2001, p. 50).

### *Theoretical underpinning*

The importance of media is vital all around the globe and its significance cannot be denied in this postmodern era (Giddens, 1991, p. 3). News discourse analysis touches back to the scholarly work produced by Van Dijk (2011, p. 361; Fairclough 2013, p.10). There is a range of theories in the discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis that investigates the process of migration (Permyakova & Antineskul, 2016, p.321). For example, the discourse analysis discovers language learning, the part of society in shaping the distinctiveness through languages and the suggestions for scholastic strategies using cognitive approach (Collier, 1995, p.10; Hatch, 1992, p.310). The study of immigrants through discourse analysis is associated with acculturational research (Berry, 2001, p.621). Wood & King find that the media plays a vibrant role in which media artists and customers as well as emigrants and marginal groups make sense of migration and its magnitudes (2001, p.6 ).

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p.9) have introduced the new dimension of discourse analysis exploring multimodal semiotic resources. Their work signposts prototypical change from the study of language to the study of modes. The authors also assert that the development of communication and discourse is influenced by overall changes in society and social life, and media has no exception. Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 9) suggest that analysis of multimodal text including every mode to convey meaning has been the subject of intellectual investigation when a number of linguists realized the significance of other semiotic modes equally to convey the meaning (p.6). Now enormous amount of multimodal semiotic work has been perceived by the researchers with multiple dimensions (Abdullahi-Idiagbon, 2013, p.1). In the realm of technological change, the most prominent is the media discourse in the global world. There is significant amount of work in the literature in the field of digital print media that reveals the use of multimodal semiotic text. For example, new articles and visuals have also been considered for research in this regard. However, to the researcher best knowledge, the titles of news articles and the images, related to the Afghan immigrants in term of their return from Pakistan might not be studied. Ademilokun & Olateju, (2015, p.1) examine multimodal resources to analyze visual images in the discourse of political rally of 2011 election movement in Southwestern Nigeria. The study concluded that, semiotic resources or artefacts are an important aspect of political rallies because of the inherent political, cultural, and social communication that are revealed through them.

The fast pace of changing life style has led media to use the extensive semiotic resources with diverse functions as the advanced communicative strategies (Berger, 2015, p.20). These resources may include linguistic and paralinguistic features, images, technology and so on. Following Halliday's (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p.3) idea of grammar in terms of meaning making resource, Van Leeuwen states that every mode of communication whether verbal or written, facial expression to visuals or any technological source, is semiotic resource. This view is supported by Danielsson & Selander, who assert that any resource which can be used for

communication is semiotic resource (2014, p.26).

Hence, every resource articulates social and cultural meanings. Subsequently, cultural, historical and political realization of social functions has been brought about by various modes. So every mode presents interlinked meaning with other mode (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2007, p.35). Thus every resource/mode has meaning making potential. Semiotic potential' is related to the term 'affordance', offered by Gibson (1979, p. 14) who states that affordances are the possible uses of any object, and provide subjective or objective meanings (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 5). The similar view is held by Halliday, who purposes words and sentences have specific meanings which may be studied in the social context. He emphasizes that the non-fixation of meaning does not lead to infer meaning of any kind. It is the social context in which meaning making process is carried on. The study of semiotic potential demonstrates that how semiotic resources have been used to communicate by providing semiotic inventory explore critical and linguistic significance of social actors. Therefore, the role of images cannot be denied to play a substantial role in argumentation and manipulating information from the context and for this purpose they do not need verbalization of the text. They can contribute directly to the communication and infer meaning from the context (Aspeitia, 2012, p.360) which will also be the focus of the study.

### *Data Collection and Sample*

The data in the paper consist of selected titles and visuals of news articles published on the return of Afghan immigrants to Afghanistan in international and Pakistani electronic print media. The electronic editions of the popular international newspaper named, The guardian (UK), The Washington Post (U.S), Human Right Watch, CNN (U.S), Human right Watch (U.S), Aljazeera News, The Dawn News, and The Express Tribune (Pakistan), from 10 June 2012 to 10 June 2017 are selected for the study.

### *Nature of the Data*

The data are selected through purposive sampling. Only relevant instances about the return of Afghan refugees from the popular international newspapers are analysed due to the constraint of time and word limit. The popular newspapers are selected due to their worldwide publication and a wide range of readership. Moreover, The United States of America (U.S) and United Kingdom (U.K) are influential in terms of policy making, media projection and propagation. The popular Pakistani newspapers are selected because of their immediate context with reference to the immigration phenomenon. Since Arab world has also been facing war and immigration crisis, so, Aljazeera news is also selected for analysis.

### *Ethical Consideration and Limitations*

Since the data have an open access to all, consent was not required from the gate keeper/s of the data resource. All aspects of multimodal discourse have not been considered for analysis due to time constraint and words limitation that is one of the restrictions of the study.

## **Data analysis**

The social semiotic perspective will be used as a theoretical framework for the study which provides tools to analyze different ways of communication to contribute in the formation of the social world (Hodge & Kress, 1988, 20). According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001, p12), technology integrates different modes, such as text, images, video, voice, music and sound effects, producing text as a design. However the current study analyses only written and visual texts. Each title of the news article will be separately analyzed to provide the detailed depiction of return of Afghans. Leeuwen's descriptive frameworks, of social actor network, social action, and visual social actors will be applied to critically analyze the different modes and socio-semantic categories which will be mentioned in next sections (2008, p.50).

## **Discussion**

### ***Representing Social Actors***

Leeuwen (2008) suggests that all texts, all representations and all the doings of the world may be comprehended as the demonstrations of societal practices and all the participants are social actors who perform different functions. Undoubtedly, discourses re-contextualize social practices, and in this process, aspects of transformation and legitimation cannot be ignored even at minimum level (p.23). Simultaneously, discourses represent social actors involved in social practices, contributing to construct identities for them namely, social actors. Ensuing Halliday's (1985, p.50), he emphasizes that culture gives the base for connotations rather than language, so it may not be tangled to any specific semiotic. Hence, all the actions verbal or written or physical are context specific and meanings can be inferred by context. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, texts may be considered as illustrations as well as communications which are based on social practices. The synchronized ways of doing things in a society are called social practices. Each of the representational choices is tied to specific linguistic or rhetorical realizations. However, only relevant features will be used to analyze the social actors (Afghan refugees, immigrants and Pakistan government) in the titles of the selected news articles.

### ***Exclusion and Inclusion***

Social actors may be included or excluded in media discourse according to the interest and objectives in relation to the people for whom they are envisioned.

Example 1: *The Dawn News*.

Pakistan hosts second largest refugee population globally (Rafi, 2015).

The title draws text on a depiction of the social exercise of hosting immigrants as institutionalized in Pakistan. It also represents other social practices which function to legitimize it such as, welcoming them warmly and issuing temporary resident cards for migrants. These performances comprise certain displays of social actors. The text of the title includes some actors, for instance Pakistan government officials and military, but excludes others, for instance,



the people who have helped refugees to assimilate in Pakistani culture. Some of the exclusions may be acquitted while others propagate tactics of producing distress and fear, depicting Pakistan government as enemies of immigrants such as in example 2.

#### Example 2: *Aljazeera*

Fearing and fleeing in Pakistan: More than 2.3 million have been forced from their homes across the conflict-ridden North West since 2009 (Hashim, 2014).

Henceforth, exclusion or inclusion to highlight some aspect of reality and to overshadow another, make a significant feature of critical discourse analysis.

#### *Role allocation*

The work of many critical linguists such as Fairclough, (1989, p. 120; Kress and Hodge 1979, p.65; Van Dijk, 1991, p. 50) presents the role of social actors as “agent” (actor) and as “patient” (goal) in relation to a given action. This is important because of their embodied roles in society and grammatical role in the texts. Therefore, representation may have the ability to alter the social associations among the members of the society. Here is an example from the Dawn News, Pakistan, in which Afghan refugees the social actors in relation to the action are grammatically, of such as ‘appealing’ and further stay in Pakistan is the goal. At this point, afghan refugees have been given active and dynamic role as they are appealing whereas Pakistan has passive role as it has been represented as undergoing the activity.

#### Example 3: *The Dawn news*

Stay in Pakistan: Afghan refugees appeal for extension – Pakistan (Akbar, 2016).

Pakistani press has given the refugees active role, which is quite the opposite of international media strategy where Afghan refugees have been galvanized as besieged, which will be further discussed. The active role of the Afghan refugees in the above example title is visibly foregrounded to signify their role.

#### *Genericization and Specification*

The Afghan immigrants as social actors may be denoted in terms of generic and specific references. The participants can be classified as groups or as individuals. This classification is an instrument for the regulatory change of physical and social realities and society’s influence over the notion of those realities (Kress and Hodge, 1979, p63). The demonstration of social actors may be understood in media by the use of plural without article as in example 4.

#### Example 4: *The Washington Post*

Pakistan cracks down on Afghan immigrants, fearing an influx as U.S. leaves Afghanistan (Craig, 2014).

In the above example Afghan immigrants are realized by the plural without article. It means the



class of Afghan immigrants has been taken as a whole, without mentioning presence of illegal immigrants. The title does not show that only illegal and unregistered Afghans may face the problem of cracking down in Pakistan. Pakistan has been accused of causing troubles for all Afghans as a group. Genericization can be comprehended by the use of singular with the definite article, as shown in example 4. On the one hand, the use of definite article refers to the miserable conditions of all Afghans in the context of their migration from Afghanistan. In example 5, on the other hand, use of ‘the’ with green-eyed girl specifies her circumstances as Afghan refugee who is famous worldwide due to his picture on Nat Geo cover page.

Example 5: *The Washington Post*

From a Nat Geo cover to a mug shot: The sad story of the green-eyed ‘Afghan Girl’ (Bearak, 2017).

Again, the title of ‘The Washington Post’ may paint here a damaging picture of Pakistan’s government by not indicating the real situation. In fact, Gula, the green-eyed girl was arrested by Pakistani police for having the fake documents for living in Pakistan. In this way the title places, Pakistan at distant place from the refugees, who have been hosted in Pakistan for decades. It also genericizes Pakistan’s cruel attitude towards refugees regardless of the problems, Pakistan have been facing.

***Assimilation, Association and Dissociation***

Social actors can be categorized as individuals or groups in doing critical discourse analysis. In many instances of international reporting, Afghan migrants have been individualized and separated from Pakistan without acknowledging that Pakistan sheltered them for more than 37 years. For instance, in the example 6 the Pakistan government, on the other hand, is personalized, as a strong individual, and Afghan refugees the people as an identical and consensual assembly.

Example 6: *BBC News Asia*

The reverse exodus of Pakistan's Afghan refugees reported (BBC Reporter, 2016).

The words choice in example 6 may give the destructive impression of Pakistan government’s action which might be necessary for the existence of Pakistan in the eyes of Pakistan officials. Also, in example 7 Afghan refugees are collectivized with the use of plural noun ‘refugees’ and pronoun ‘theirs’.

Example 7: *The Express Tribune*

Afghan refugees suffering for no fault of theirs (Mohmand, 2016).

The aggregation, another major kind of assimilation is recognized by the use of different quantifiers such as ‘600000’ illegal Afghans and ‘number’ as expressed in example 8 and 9

respectively.

Example 8: *The Express Tribune*

‘600,000 illegal Afghan refugees living in Pakistan’ (Zia, 2017).

Hence, the absence of modality shows, the immigrants are gathered and treated as figures. It does not only mark them as a focus of commercial intention, but also makes them a big crowd which is so “legitimately feared” by Pakistan’s action.

Example 9: *The Washington Post*

Number of displaced in Afghanistan doubled since 2013 to 1.2 million, report says (Gul, 2016).

The members of the society can be classified as associated or disassociated groups. Such as, in the titles of the news articles analyzed in this paper all Afghans are associated with the group of Afghan immigrants and refugees entered Pakistan, having legal or illegal documents. Whereas Pakistan government, police and army have been shown on the same page to force Afghans to return to their homeland.

### *Nomination and Categorization*

Nomination is used to represent social actors in terms of their sole identity and the functions they perform with others in the forms of categorization. Van Leeuwen (2008, p, 40) believes it interesting to analyze which social actors are, in a certain discourse, categorized and which are nominated. The nameless characters in stories and novels have no identity for reader or writer. In press discourse, similar happens, for example, Pakistan has been nominalized separately for its actions and Afghans have been nominalized and categorized as helpless poor refugees. The nominalization is realized with the help of proper nouns, such as Pakistan and Afghans. These are some of the key features of social actors’ network through which Afghan immigrants and Pakistan are analyzed in media discourse. In the next section social actions of these actors will be analyzed.

### *Representing Social Action*

To address the research question the study also focuses on social action, before doing the analysis of visual social actors. Van Leeuwen (2008, p.55) asserts that a short quotation can have the ability to generate the critical significance to exemplify the social action such as in this study, action are represented in the titles of the news articles. For example, BBC August 2016 presents three kinds of social action in the following title.

Example 10: BBC News Asia

The reverse exodus of Pakistan's Afghan refugees reported (BBC Reporter, 2016).

First the action of migration of Afghanis to Pakistan and becoming refugees, second reaction of

Pakistan to reversing them towards Afghanistan and the reporting of these reactions by BBC News in its digital addition in 2016. But they may not be symbolized in an indistinguishable manner. The BBC report and the responses of Pakistan are exemplified as the performances and tactics of specific social actors, as apparent and perceptible incidences (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.55). The process of evacuation of Afghans to their homeland is objectivated, represented as an isolated and incorporeal occurrence by the specific social actor, Pakistan. Consequently, it is represented to the world as an intangible and an inevitable quasi-natural processes of change. Similarly, the title also signifies Afghans as miserable refugees who are forced to go back. Thus, immigration remains an unnoticeable process in the title news, while the reaction of Pakistan to refugees, is indicated particularly, as though it ought to be the focal point of consideration for the reader. The key role of representational choices in the news articles' titles may be noticed. For instance, in the following example:

Example 11: *BBC News Asia*

Viewpoint: Why Afghan refugees are facing a humanitarian catastrophe (Rashid, 2016)

Representational choices may form specific kind of biased discourse, based on distress of facing great trouble or destruction and dread of loss of life, income and identity, fear of the unfamiliar and incomprehensible “other” (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 70). See also example 2. Representational choices in the form of grammatical and stylistic realizations such as the condition of Afghans is signified through active verbs (are facing, fearing); the actions of Pakistan government without nominalizing through deletion (“reversal of refugees”); and the actions of refugees are represented through abstract notions (“humanitarian catastrophe”). In this way socio-semantic categories such as objectivation, and naturalization help to relate social action and social actors (ibid).

### *Social Reaction*

Example 12: *The Washington Post*

Pakistan uses 1.5 million Afghan refugees as pawns in dispute with U.S. (Constable, 2016).

In the above text, the Pakistan government's concern about Afghan refugees and the U.S are featured and represented as involved. All of these are interwoven in the text showing actions and reactions. The refugees have been presented as pawns and the word pawn is used as a metaphor in the title. The number of refugees, that is 1.5 million and the dispute with the U.S express concerns, and hence, raise the questions of who is denoted as responding how to whom. It also reveals basis for critical discourse analysis (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.56). Here Pakistan is signified as a reactor and Afghan refugees are the receiver of that reaction in response of dispute with America.

Constable (2017) mentions that Pakistani analysts believe that U.S. executives identify Pakistan as a deterrent for dialogues for peace with the Taliban, who may put pressure on Pakistan military. Subsequently, the Constable infers that Pakistan is considering the

immigrants as hostages to apt the United States to provide military aid. This may presents the one side of the picture. Nevertheless, the history is witnessed that Pakistan has suffered a lot and sacrificed much in the process of peace and war. This kind of text leaves the question of power out of reflection. For example, the Pakistan government in the text, on the one hand, is exposed to power by U.S, and on the other hand the text also reflects the use of power by Pakistan demonstrating the new role towards Afghan refugees. This sort of texts does not characterize responses by the same token to all contributors. For example, the title dwells on the reaction of Pakistan only, but it does not show the U.S and Afghan refugees' reaction. The power of social actors is inversely proportional to the emotional responses of the actions.

### *Material and Semiotic Action*

Societal practices may be inferred as substantial, as well as meaningful unit. Subsequently, an act may or may not have purpose or effect (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.45). Examples 4 and 5 represent the same phase, where example 4 demonstrates materialized action (forced) and in example 5 semiotized actions are represented as meaning (renewed threat).

#### Example 13: *Human Right Watch*

Pakistan: Mass Forced Returns of Afghan Refugees UN Refugee Agency Complicit in Government Coercion (Simpson, 2017)

#### Example 14: *Human Right Watch*

Pakistan: Renewed Threats to Afghan Refugees Extend Legal Residency Status through 2017 (Kine, 2016)

Yet, the focus is not that example 13 is literal and example 14 is metaphorical, but the presentation of the same act of returning refugees is denoted in two ways, each of which conveys a discrete approach, and understanding of the action. It is associated with the power words and acts, differentiating between the semiotic act of renewing threats and the substantial act of forcing refugees to go home. Halliday, (1985, p.31) differentiates substantial and semiotic action in terms of grammatical realizations. He asserts that vocal practices subjugate a medium place between material and mental processes, between activities and responses. They may be similar to the answerable doings such as, what Pakistani government is doing to Afghan refugees and answer is, it is forcing them to leave Pakistan. Conversely, they look like mental processes, in that they are intended to present as their object, which is not the occurrence of quantifiable practices. Hence, one cannot say Pakistan government threatens directly to refugees.

#### Example 15: *BBC News Asia*

Harassment' drives Afghan refugees from Pakistan (BBC Reporter, 2015)

The actions of refugees are not mentioned in text of above example as it needs authority, but the word harassment has power to drive the refugees from Pakistan, and it would be transactive action that has the goal (refugees). The refugees' position can be inferred as nontransactive who

are affected by an actor's action that is, Pakistani government. To extend Halliday's notions, Van Leeuwen (2008, p.60) makes a distinction between effective actions for persons and effective actions for things and named them as interactive and instrumental transactions respectively. The interaction can be apprehended by verbs which may have a human goal, as "drives Afghan refugees" in example 15. If the goals of such verbs are non-human, they can be inferred as metonymical displacements (as while somebody drives a car instead of human being to do something). Consequently refugees are shown as helpless and powerless community who is dependent on Pakistan's attitude towards them, regardless of the complexities created with the opening of borders for Afghan immigrants. For example, the free movement of every kind of weapons in Pakistan which have been used for the killing of its own citizens. Moreover, the burdened economy is also one of the crucial challenges that Pakistan has been facing by the decades of hosting of Afghan refugees. Now, they are suddenly being represented as "others" being the biggest threat for Pakistan. The critical problems faced by some of the Afghans' terrorist activities have not been taken into account at all. Likewise, material action, semiotic action can also be transactive or non transactive. Again, the social practices of lower-status participants are oftentimes exemplified as nontransactive, such as example 7 shows Afghans have no power and are expelled by Pakistan.

### *Objectivation and Descriptivization*

Social actors' performances can be activated or deactivated. When any action is activated, it is grammatically realized in the verbal group of a non-embedded clause (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.130). While action is deactivated, they are realized by different means; however, they continue to represent action and reaction. Nominalizations are used to objectivize actions by a subject of a clause or by a prepositional phrase, as in example 16 "the iconic face of the refugee struggle" or prepositional phrase "of the refugee struggle". Sharbat Gula is famous for her picture in National Geographic title page in 1982, who migrated from Afghan three decades ago. Since she is one of the afghan refugees, she has been realized metonymically, by the various kind of displacement such as substitution of the word Afghans who are facing different problem associated with migration. So in the title there is no use of word Afghan, instead reader can predict to whom the title is talking about due to her popularity and worldwide fame.

Example 16: *Aljazeera*

Sharbat Gula: The iconic face of the refugee struggle (Ragobeer, 2016)

Specialization is the exchange of a place associated with an action or reaction for the action or reaction itself. In this example the place of Afghanistan is absent because Sharbat Gula is famous for her title picture in green eyes, is attributed to Afghanistan. Sharbat Gula's image was captured when she was 12 with her prominent green eyes in a National Geographic front page when she was in a refugee camp in Peshawar. Now at 40 she was arrested for false documents and illegal stay in Pakistan. Again, the title only mirrors one angle of the picture. It depicts the girl as iconic face but in a poor state who is struggling as a refugee without indicating the reason of her arrest. It is obvious that media shows the world those aspects of reality that it desires to

display (Berger, 2013, p.5).

Example 17: *The Express Tribune*

Illegal Afghan immigrants told to leave Peshawar (2012)

Objectivation takes place generally in terms of negative actions and reactions as perpetual characteristics of societal members, such as in examples 8, 9, 10, 11 the words illegal, fearing forced and unregistered demonstrate it. On the other hand, descriptivizations, represent actions or reactions as characteristics of social actors positively (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.66). Hence, the purpose of objectivation is to add purposes, or legitimations, and both can be observed in these examples. The Express Tribunes uses the term 'illegal' frequently to realize the refugees action as illegal or beyond law. So it may serve to legitimize the action of illegal migration, bringing negative connotations about illegal refugees get them registered. As well it also highlights the fear of Afghan refugees to be expelled as reaction of documentation as shown in following example.

Example 18: *The Express Tribune*

Fearing forced repatriation: Majority of Afghan refugees still unregistered (Baloch, 2012).

Less permanent and positive qualities of social actors in the form of actions and reactions could be depicted by the process of descriptivization (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.66). Examples 19 and 20 show the positive foregrounding of Pakistan government which is extending the date of stay of refugees in Pakistan and backgrounding their feelings of insecurity and fear as represented in the mostly in the international media.

Example 19: *The Express Tribune*

Stay of Afghan refugees extended till year-end (Riazul Haq, 2017)

Example 20: *The Express Tribune*

Afghan refugees may be allowed to stay on till 2018 (Riazul Haq, 2016).

***Deagentialization***

When humans bring about any action it is called agentialized and the action performed by any other thing such as natural force, is called deagentialized. There are three types of deagentialization: eventuation, existentialization, and naturalization (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.66). Eventuation is realized as an occurrence of an event, without the participation of human beings. So, why and by whom, an event is happened could not be asked. Therefore, the involuntary action 'destitute' may be recognized as a physical process which could be the result of exile with its passive sense.

Example 21: *The Guardian*

Exiled from Pakistan, destitute Afghans return to a country at war. Hundreds of thousands of

Afghans, banished from Pakistan, find destruction, violence and hardship in their homeland (Rasmussen, 2016).

The existence of action or reaction is represented as existentialization. Alternatively, existentialization is realized in objectivated ways, for instance, through nominalizations “illegal Afghan refugees” in example 8. It means such number of refugees exist in Pakistan. Naturalization occurs when any social practice and its response are represented as a natural process by means of abstract material processes, such as in example 22 the use of word catastrophic which is related to actions and reactions to specific interpretations of material process of forced departure of the refugees.

Example 22: *Aljazeera*

Afghan exodus from Pakistan could be 'catastrophic' without urgent aid.

### ***Generalization and Abstraction***

Actions and reactions may be generalized to different degrees and it may be obvious only in an analysis of the semantic relations between the depictions of the same actions and reactions within one text (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 70). For instance, in example 25 it can be noticed.

Example 23: *The Guardian*

Forced repatriation to Afghanistan: 'We didn't think it would happen to us'

The guardian generalizes the process of deportation without mentioning the difference between legal or illegal immigrants. In this way, it highlights the only one aspect of the repatriation, negating the scenario of Pakistan. This title signifies both action and reaction of social actors. Since, title expresses refugees' feelings, “We didn't think” as a result of forced repatriation.

Example 24: *The Dawn News*

Pakistan's stepchildren: What it means to live and die in Pakistan, but not call it home — this is the story of millions of Afghans (2016).

Dawn news metaphorically uses the compound noun “Stepchildren” referring to Afghan immigrants who live in Pakistan more than four decades but have no right to call Pakistan their home. Considering Afghanis stepchildren, is demonstrated as a general social practice that classifies stepchildren and real children. This news title is further reinforced when defense minister announces that Afghan children would not be given permanent residential status in Pakistan.

### ***Over determination***

Over determination means the symbolic representation of social actors may refer to their real life situations. For example Afghan refugees may be simultaneously father or mother, care taker, a worker, performing more than one social role in the society, but collectively they are



symbolized ( a form of over determination) as Afghan immigrants and refugees.

### *The Visual Representation of Social Actors (migrants)*

The researcher has used Van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress (2007, p.114–54) framework of visual representation to analyze immigrants' visuals in international media. To do visual analysis, three dimensions need to be considered: the distance, the social relation and the social interaction between portrayed people and the viewer. In these cases, the relation is figurative and imagined and people depict the social actors as they are outsiders or friends, as though they are “below” us or “above” us, as though they are in interaction with us or not, and so on.



. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37607785>

**Figure 1.** Afghan refugee families are returning home after being repatriated from Pakistan

### *Social Distance*

Likewise real life, also in pictures distance shows the relationship between members of a society. Generally strangers may be depicted distant from each other, and friends seem closer. Hence distance indicates the closeness among people, no matter the closeness is for the time being or constant, it can be induced from the context. Symbolically people in a long shot are shown as strangers, and in close shot they are shown linked with the viewers.

This is exploited in figure 1, which comes from The BBC news online edition where juxtaposed are many women covered in “Burqas” and children. The women, shown as culturally similar (in the symbolic burqas), sitting together are distant, shown as “strangers”. All of the indigenous women in the figure 1 are depicted from considerable distance that it is difficult to recognize their specific individualities (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2007, p.130). The caption of the figure 1 and the image complement each other to highlight the difficulties faced by Afghan refugees. On the contrary, figure 2 shows the instance of immigrant children standing beside each other show closeness and can be depicted as siblings. This sort of distinctive use of distance is commonly found in newspapers industry with queries of immigration. Only the overall impression came across in the two images that show the miseries of immigrants such as helpless and shelter-less.



Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37607785>

**Figure 2.** Afghan Children in outskirts of Islamabad

### *Social Relation and interaction*

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2008) assert that an individual can be seen from vertical or horizontal angle. If a person is viewed from vertical angle, it means it is seen from above, at eye level, or from below, and through horizontal angle a person can be seen directly or laterally, or from somewhere in between. Henceforth, these positions display two sides of the personified social relation such as authority and contribution between the viewer and the people in the picture (p.139).

The vertical angle may be linked with power transformations. To look top to bottom at someone implies supremacy over the person, with respect to the person, the high status or position in life. The figure 3 may be interpreted to show power differences. One boy in the image is looking with half opened eyes and begging for food. All hands beg for food depicting their position for viewer. There may be no need for more gazes to depict figure 3. All the beseeched hands are the mirror of their lower position. Moreover, the caption of the picture provides further illustration of the refugees' condition. It says that the host government is unable to fulfill the need of immigrants. But, it does not say that Pakistan is a developing country, and most of its citizens are living below standard life. In the face of it, Pakistan has accepted the immigrants with open arms and sheltered them. Figure 3 also describes the use of semiotic resources/modes to paint the picture of refugees in Pakistan.



Retrieved from : [https://tribune.com.pk/story/370033/illegal-afghan-immigrants-told-to-leave peshawar/](https://tribune.com.pk/story/370033/illegal-afghan-immigrants-told-to-leave-peshawar/)

**Figure 3.** Nearly 400,000 Afghan Immigrants Live in Peshawar; provincial govt cannot bear burden anymore, says Peshawar.

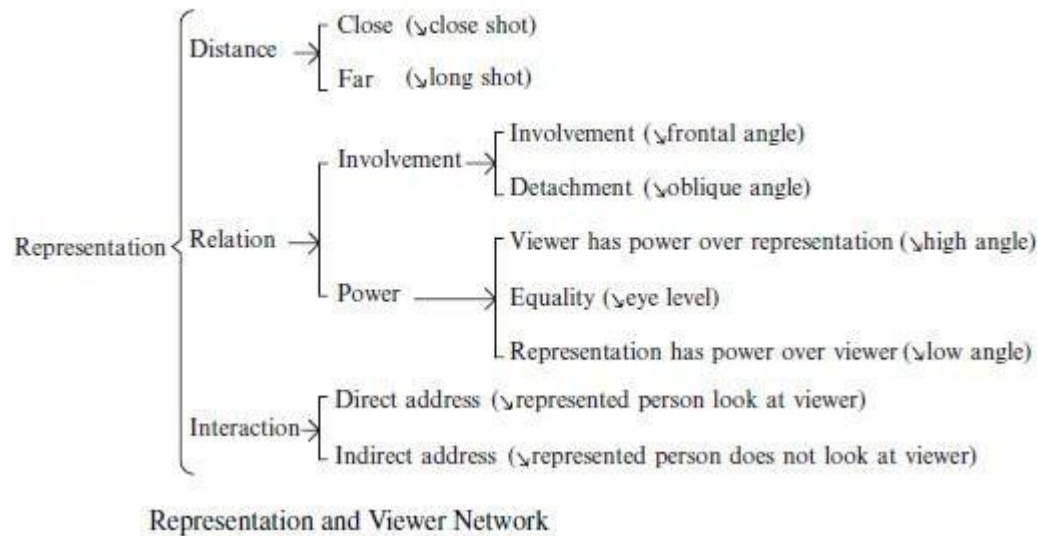
Figure 4 shows a girl Afghan refugee in Pakistan. The picture does not only depict the girl but also shows its relation to the viewers, in terms of their depiction of the picture. Not only viewers are looking at her, but she is also looking at them creating a social relation between social actors (girl and viewers).



Retrieved from : : <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/01/pakistan-renewed-threats-afghan-refugees>

**Figure 4.** An Afghan girl stands by the doorway of her family's house in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan. December 2014

The Afghan girl is shown from some distance, and as viewers we are looking down on them. She is depicted as socially below us, as low in power compared to the viewers. Her look can be symbolized in different ways: as a request, or as a reprimand, or both (Van Leeuwen, 2008 p.139).



**Figure 5.** The visual representation of social actors Adapted from *Discourse and Practice* (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.141)

### Depicting People

The depiction of people in visuals include the process of exclusion, inclusion, roles, specific and generic classification, individual and groups, and categorization which will be discussed in following sections. While depicting Afghan immigrants and refugees there is not significance instances of social exclusion. Social exclusion means not recognizing the presence of some people who live and work in a society.



Retrieved from: Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/feb/13/un-accused-of-failing-afghan-refugees-forced-to-return-home-from-pakistan>

**Figure 6.** Afghan refugees in Pakistan register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) repatriation centre as they prepare to return to their home country

However, there are many instances of inclusion of various social actors whether human or non-human in different images. In figure 5 there is exclusion of children from the image, but it does not mean that children are not affected by the deportation because in many of the pictures



afghan refugee women and children are exclusively presented to highlight their condition such as in figures 7.



Retrieved from : Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global>

development/2016/oct/06/exiled-pakistan-destitute-afghanistan-war

**Figure 7.** An Afghan family on the road between the Afghan- Pakistan border and Jalalabad, in Afghanistan's Nananhar province. More than 100,000 Afghans have been coerced out of Pakistan since July

### ***Roles***

The individuals in pictures may be described as doing something or not doing anything. If they act something, they are called agents, and if they are receiver of the action, they are called patient. An important aspect here is, of course, what they do or what is done to them and which of the things they may in reality do or have done to them are not shown (Van Leeuwen, 2008,p.143). It is observed that in Nederveen Pieterse's book *White on Black, there are 262 illustrations of* cartoons, comic strips, product labels, and so on (Pieterse, 1992, p. 70). In these illustrations, blacks are doing things as agents to or for white people.



Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37607785>

**Figure 8.** Afghan refugees' families are returning home after being repatriated from Pakistan

In the same way, as shown in figure 8, the women Afghan refugees are represented as wearing typical types of burqa, sitting together, taking care of their children and waiting for their men to arrange their departure to Afghanistan. In figure 9, a woman is shown, washing and hanging clothes, a typical role allocated to a woman in Asian culture.

The figure 8 also shows the condition of immigrants generally, though it contains only women and children's images. When people are snapped as anticipated models to show attractive or pathetic styles, or some specific characteristic, their individuality disappears behind what categorizes them behind their clothing, the culture and the position. Consequently all individuals are shown as immigrants waiting for their departure to homeland.



Retrieved from : <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/nov/17/verifying-refugees-stories-why-is-it-so-difficul>

**Figure 9.** Registering refugees at camps is a complex process.

Depicting people in this way excludes them from some roles and limits them to others. It also links them with passive or undesirable roles. But it is not true for all situations. This does not have to be racist in the case of Afghani women in these pictures as role allocation of black people. The context differentiates the interpretation in both cases. Hence, these women's role could be related to cultural and traditional rather than racial bigotries.

### *Specific and Generic*

People can be depicted specifically or generically. This study is important from the study of racist discourse. In the figure 10 Shrbat Gula is specifically depicted as an immigrant after getting arrested by Pakistan police having fake documents. There are many illegal Afghans in Pakistan, but Sharbat Gula is painted especially, just because of she was once on the title page of National Geographic in 1984. When media talks about immigrants it needs to be distinguished that whether it mentions all Afghan immigrants in general or specifically.



Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37845265>

**Figure 10.** Sharbat Gula, the “Afghan Girl”, pictured ahead of a court hearing in peshawar

### *Individuals and Groups*

Persons might be portrayed as individuals or as groups in images to signify their role and relation in social practices. For instance, all persons in the figure 11 could be depicted individuals as well as grouped. On the one hand, they all make one group in a sense that all are immigrants in a queue waiting for updating of their family data. On the other hand, the identity cards in their hands demonstrate their individuality.



Retrieved from: <http://dailymirror.com.pk/Pakistan/14-Feb-17/afghan-refugees-return>

**Figure 11.** Afghan refugees wait to update their family data at the UNHCR Verification Center in Chamkani, on the outskirts of Peshawar, Pakistan, January 26, 2017

### *Categorization*

To do visual analysis people are classified through cultural or biological characteristics. The attributes, such as dress or hairdo are used to realize cultural features. Biological features are related to blood, including colour of the skin and so on and these are the beyond of the scope of this study. Therefore, only cultural categorization of Afghan immigrants will be discussed. For example in the figures 1 and 8 all women in typical type of burqas are shown culturally associated with the same group. These attributes are very vivid to communicate the connotation of their presence showing particular sociocultural group. These photographs are used in many



instances of international media to show typical Afghan women. Apparently they all look same, since it may not be possible to depict their feelings and expressions about the circumstances which they are facing. The main reason for this is, they are all behind the veil.



Retrieved from: hashoo foundation <http://thedi diplomat.com/2015/11/what-about>

**Figure 12.** What about Afghan refugees?

In the figure 11 the young girls are fairly close to the observer; they are looked down upon, and form a group which is intensely standardized having similar poses. All the girls are wearing head scarves and not looking directly at the viewer, except one girl who is looking at the viewer from the central point of the picture. The woman Shurbat Gula, however, is individualized and represented as specific person rather than grouped together with all women wearing Burqas and covering their face. Although, she is wearing burqa, but she is framed separately by the foregrounding of her own picture on National Geographic cover page. She also looks directly at the viewer, in closely framed eye-level shots. She is depicted as close to the viewers, irrespective of whether she wears Burqa or not. In short, these three pictures juxtapose three different ways of looking at Afghan girls and women in the context of immigration.

## Conclusion

The article presents the ways in which social actors can be characterized in the media discourse. For this purpose the social actors (immigrants and Pakistan officials) are classified, functionalized, and categorized to make them explicit. The text of the titles restricted itself to the representation of social actors which include two types. One who concerns about refugees and the other who does not. Mostly concerned persons are shown in international news and unconcerned or less concerned are identified in the news of Pakistani media who are more concerned about their country and the situation created due to open borders and poor control on borders. In Pakistani media, Pakistan has been individualized and nominated who tolerates the largest number of refugees. Pakistani media also highlights the extension of the stay of refugees in positive manner. The deportation of refugees is often backgrounded in Pakistani news articles' title. They are nominated, collectivized, activated and grouped as illegal and unregistered. The Afghan refugees are aggregated by the help of quantifiers, to represent them

as mass and as burden for Pakistan. In Pakistani press the government is rarely foregrounded in the process of deportation and the articles' title keep the reality of forced return from Pakistan at contented distance from the reader. However, sympathy is also shown by some of the Pakistani writers (social actors) who mention refugees metaphorically step children who are paying for the fault of others. That 'other' may indicate those belong to terrorist groups involved in bomb blasting and killing innocent people.

On the other hand, international media portrayed a very harsh picture of Pakistan government which keeps on exodus and coercion of Afghan refugees. The authors of these titles also work as social actors who describe these acts as legitimized fearful practices of Pakistani officials, to their readers. These titles directly nominate Pakistan for cracking down the refugees. Whereas these depict Afghan refugees as fearing, fleeing, suffering and facing problems. The article also interprets the ways in which action and reaction can be presented in media discourse in the context of immigration. The issues of the return of Afghan immigrants from Pakistan, is portrayed negatively. The actions and reactions of Pakistan government are transactive. They include material action such as forced, exiled, along with behavioralized semiotic interactions such as fear and destitute. These actions and reactions are activated to represent Pakistan. Afghan refugees are also realized engaged in actions and reactions, but their actions are portrayed as helpless, pathetic, pitiful and miserable. Pakistan government is represented as taking actions against Afghan refugees notwithstanding the griefs of the refugees. Pakistan government's action are instrumentalized and foregrounded with immigrant. The immigrants' actions are portrayed as nontransactive and objectivated rather than reactive. The process of return of refugees is realized in a vivid manner. Other actions such as fearing, fleeing, state of uncertainty, facing difficulties and besieging are presented in term of distillation and naturalization. The study allows readers to glimpse forced actions of repatriation of Afghans in which the text of the articles' titles presents a reasonable debate about this action of deportation in Pakistan, but keeps a safe distance from what actually goes on in Pakistan, and acts of Pakistan are represented in a vague and abstract manner. Similarly, visual representation of social actors portrayed Afghan refugees besieged, miserable, and helpless with the complements of captions. They are included, excluded, individualized, categorized, and given roles to realize their presence. Media including both Pakistani and international, select and exclude the events in the way it wants to be interpret, communicate and frame the certain aspects of observed realism. The media affect the attitude, behaviour and influence the way people build their images and discernments of the world. It also magnifies one aspect while cutting back another aspect of the reality. The current study may not only illuminate a gateway for unprejudiced debate on the reasons and causes of the return of Afghan immigrants but also imply to consider their human rights to live in the country where they acculturated and assimilated for more than four decades.

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